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translated by STEVE FELD

EDUCATIONAL FILMS

Undoubtedly, some of the films which I have classified as commercial and documentary are equally educational films. Nevertheless, I wish to place in a separate class those films where entertainment is merely a pretext and whose real aim is instructional.

As I have already said, the appearance of educational films is relatively recent, occurring around 1950 in both the Congo and the British territories. In former French Equatorial Africa it is even more recent, having developed at the end of the 1950s.

My discussion will deal separately with English-speaking Africa, the former Belgian Congo, and former French Africa.

English-Speaking Africa. Before the last war, audiovisual media were extremely rare in Sub-Saharan Africa, although lantern slides were used to illustrate health lectures in Nigeria as early as 1920. It was in 1929 that the first truly educational film in Africa was produced, in order to help combat an epidemic of the plague in Lagos, the capital of Nigeria. This film showed Africans how rats spread the disease, and encouraged them to cooperate in a general rat extermination campaign, which was so successful that the government of Nigeria decided to continue using film in the future. Fortunately, however, there were very few similar occasions calling for recourse to this kind of education through films. Yet it was in Nigeria, some years later, that the organization of overseas films was to take shape.

The Colonial Film Unit was founded in 1939 by the British government to secure African participation in the war effort; Mr. William Sellers, who was responsible for the first experiments in education through films in Nigeria, was appointed as director. Although the immediate purpose of the Colonial Film Unit was war propaganda¹, Mr. Sellers' long-run aim was in fact to generalize the use of films for African audiences.

At the outset, the only films produced were European films; these were simply re-edited with a new narration for

African screenings (and for screenings in other overseas English language countries). To add to their attraction, short sequences shot in Africa were spliced in. This so-called "Raw Stock Scheme" for producing local sequences served the double purpose of introducing and popularizing 16mm motion pictures in Africa, and supplying raw stock for local shooting to a few enthusiastic filmmakers.

By the end of the war, this operation had allowed for the distribution of 200,000 meters (about 666,000 feet) of 16mm film, and the equipping of 20 mobile cinema trucks in tropical Africa.

In 1955, the British Colonial Film Unit changed its objectives and began a program of film production to deal with the main social problems of its territories in tropical Africa, while continuing to make a few films in Great Britain showing Africans the British way of life (the best of this series is *Mister English at Home*).

Between 1945 and 1950, the Colonial Film Unit established 12 film production sections (each called "Film Units") in eight British territories in East and West Africa. During this same period, the amount of finished films totaled 50 hours, and distribution rose to over 1200 prints shown in Africa.

These Film Units were manned by first-rate technicians; but although their films always aroused great interest in Europe, it must be admitted that their success with the African public (to whom they were addressed) was relatively slight.

Systematic studies revealed the difficulties inherent in making this type of film, and showed that one of the most serious problems was the technicians' ignorance of the local communities in which the films were shot: one could hardly demand that the technicians be equally proficient as ethnographers.

In 1951, a research team consisting of a filmmaker and an anthropologist paid a long visit to Nigeria to study the question of audience reactions to films. Their report showed that the only solution was to make films with a minimum of foreign elements to distract the spectator. This, of course, threw the entire conception of "Colonial cinema" into chaos, and for the first time, it appeared that it would be necessary for films to be made for Africans by Africans.

At about this time, the British Colonial Film Unit discontinued almost all it was doing directly for the territorial Film Units. The main reason was financial: the British Government considered that it no longer had any obligation to make educational films for countries with independence a near prospect, and that it was for the treasuries of the territories concerned to provide for the management of their own film services. In 1955, it was concluded that the British Film Unit had served its purpose, and the work was to be taken over by the 14 African film services.

The Colonial Film Unit then became the "Overseas Television and Film Centre," keeping its original staff, still headed by Sellers, who transformed it first into the British agency of all the overseas film production centers (except Ghana), and then into a training school for African technicians. The value of such an organization is obviously tremendous: each African film service had its representative in London to supervise the laboratory work, film shipments,

This is the third in a series of translations of the major writings of Jean Rouch, translated by Steve Feld, which will appear in the first five issues of Studies. An introduction by Feld to the entire series of articles appears in Vol. 1 No. 1.

purchase of equipment, and to provide optimum spare parts services. The growth of television is even further increasing the activities of the center.²

But, in my opinion, the most important part of the center's work is the "film training school," the prime mover of which, George Pearson, is one of William Sellers' oldest colleagues in Nigeria and London.

The first school was opened in 1950 in Accra, and trained three Ghanaian and three Nigerian students, who were given a seven-month course which enabled them to become familiar with 16mm and 35mm film equipment. The school moved to Jamaica, then to Cyprus, and finally to London. In all, about 100 students were trained during this time. Of course, as Georges Sadoul has pointed out, none of these technicians has thus far produced a real African film, but that was not the aim of William Sellers and his followers; their only goal was to enable Africans to make their own educational films.

What, then, might be said of these films, generally speaking? It is certain that Sellers must in any case be considered one of the true pioneers of African cinema, and if, perhaps soon, a true African filmmaker springs up in Nigeria, Rhodesia, or Kenya, it will certainly be the result of the modest but obstinate effort of this man.

I have had the opportunity of seeing some of the films made by these Film Units. Many are quite disappointing, if one considers them from a purely cinematographic point of view. But their educational value is sometimes considerable, as for instance in a 1950 film by the Central African Film Unit titled *Lusaka Calling*. The purpose of this film was to promote demand for low-cost radio sets; showings of the film produced actual riots among the audiences, who immediately dashed to the shops to buy wireless radio sets which most could not obtain because the stock had been sold out almost immediately.

On the other hand, all of these films exhibit what I consider to be an extremely serious fault (a fault which by no means is reserved only for the cinema), namely the paternalism characteristic of even the films made with the best intentions. For example, the film *Leprosy*, shot in Nigeria by an entirely African crew, intends to communicate the necessity of seeking treatment, yet brings in some "African witchcraft" scenes rarely equalled for their superficiality. Was it really necessary to denigrate traditional African culture in order to better show the efficacy of foreign medical methods? Was it necessary to once again destroy in order to build? Is it not nauseating to show Africans themselves mocking their own culture, and in precisely one of the fields in which Africa has a few things to teach the rest of the world?³

The work of the Ghana Film Unit requires separate treatment. For reasons of which I am ignorant, it split off fairly early from the Colonial Film Unit, in favor of association with groups of independent English producers, or with first rate producers such as Grierson, one of the masters of the English documentary film. The Unit received its initial impetus from one of Grierson's young assistants, Sean Graham, who, with the help of the excellent Canadian cameraman, George Noble, got the center started and produced an impressive number of outstanding quality films between 1950 and 1955.

I have already mentioned the films *Jaguar* and *The Boy Kumasenu*. In fact, both of these films began as educational films, but their quality was such that they were extremely successful in both their own country and abroad. The educational films made by the Ghana Film Unit for strictly African audiences have always been of such high quality, both technically and dramatically, that they are models of their genre. From *Progress in Kodjokrom*, showing why taxes must be paid, to *Mr. Mensah Builds His House*, a propaganda film for building loans, the pictures, music, and dialogue are in the best tradition, with no concession whatsoever to demagoguery. But here we reach the limit of this genre of films. The time came for Sean Graham to make a film about the recruitment of nurses. His Irish temperament, a certain romanticism, as well as his talent combined to make *Theresa*, a shattering document on the difficult life of nurses. The government hesitated for quite a while over releasing this film, fearing that there would not be a young woman in Ghana with enough courage to embark upon such a testing career.

After Ghanaian independence, Sean Graham left the Film Unit. Though his influence is still discernible, the quality of films made since his departure is definitely lower.

Thus in Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and East Africa, Africans have been trained to take over. Their work is by no means extraordinary, but—and this is the inestimable contribution of the Film Unit's promoters—films are now regarded everywhere as an essential medium of mass communication. This means that the situation is particularly favorable for the flowering of a typically African cinematographic art in the very near future.

Former Belgian Congo. The Belgian effort in the Congo followed close behind that of the British. Toward the end of the war, the Congo government began to think about the value of cinema for the Congolese masses. As was always the case in the Congo, this action was divided into two distinct forms: government film production, and missionary film production. In both cases, and quite contrary to British Film Unit practice, attention was given to making entertainment as well as educational films.

The initial outcome was the production of special films for the Congolese, distributed together with other films selected either in Belgium or neighboring African countries (Rhodesia supplied a larger number). These films were shown either by permanent cinemas or by mobile film trucks.

The language problem seems to be one of the major obstacles that the Belgians tried to overcome. The multiplicity of vernacular languages, over and above the four major ones of Kikongo, Lingala, Tschiluba, and Kiswahili, made it necessary to invariably use local interpreters, who would deliver a translation of the dialogue into a microphone simultaneously while the sound track played in one of the four major languages. This experiment is perhaps one of the most significant made in Africa in the area of projection techniques, because, as we shall see at the end of this report, it is toward a similar system that the new African educational film industry must move, using double system projection, with the sound track in the local dialect.

Belgian efforts reached their maximum in 1957 with fifteen thousand showings for a total audience of nearly nine

million people. But what can we say of these films produced by the Belgians in the Congo before independence?

The government films strike me as incredibly superficial and paternalistic, with the African invariably treated as an overgrown child to whom everything must be explained. The missionary films, on the other hand, seem more advanced, and mention should be given to the Centre Congolais Catholique d'action cinématographique in Leopoldville, where genuinely African productions started to appear through the stimulation provided by Fathers Develoo, van Haelst, van Overschelds, and van den Heuvel. For instance, the missionaries made film versions of Congolese folk tales and even cartoons, such as the series, *Mboloko, la petite antilope*. I do not know how the missionary film would have developed if it had continued on this course. The existing films stop, both technically and in spirit, at the level of a minor guild production, while still offering promise of improvement, which, unfortunately, has not taken place.

The missionaries themselves were conscious of the shortcomings we have mentioned and, although they held to the view that films for Africans should "exclude all the love scenes, vain dreams, and violence of Westerns," they did support, as far back as 1956, the idea of Africans making African films. (See, for example, the paper read by Father van den Heuvel at the International Symposium on "The Cinema and Africa South of the Sahara.")

As regards the present state of the film industry in the Congo, in 1960 I met a few young Information Service trainees in Berlin who had come to Europe to learn filmmaking. Judging from what they said, no films had been made in the Congo since independence. Here again we must wait for what the next few years might bring.

French-speaking Africa. In the area of educational films it must frankly be said that French-speaking Africa comes last by a long shot. A few films were produced by individuals, particularly in the area of medicine (on combating malaria and other endemic diseases) but most of them date from before the war. Moreover, I cannot imagine where these films could have been shown at the time as it is only in the last few years that the former French African territories have had projection equipment.

The quality of these few films is in fact doubtful, to say the least. I have had the occasion to see the anti-malaria film at the cultural center in Niamey; no clear explanation was given of the difference in scale between the macroscopic and microscopic shots, and as a result, half of the audience (uneducated, of course) thought they were seeing cartoons and the rest (still less educated) thought it was a film about mythical animals like "Godzilla" or other "monsters from the deep" from the science fiction films being shown at the same time in the Niamey public cinema. When a territory had a young administrator who was a film enthusiast, he would try to arrange a bush film circuit with a generator truck that was borrowed; but the only program available would be documentaries on the castles of the Loire or the fishermen of Brittany. Thus in 1957, while the Ivory Coast was economically comparable to its neighbor, Ghana, all it had to compare with the Ghanaian fleet of 20 mobile film trucks was one beat-up power wagon in almost unusable condition, and an

old 16mm projector belonging to the Cultural Center which was death to any film projected through it.

However, in 1958, the Ministry of French Overseas Territories began to wake up and asked a producer, Pierre Fourré, to make a series of films for African audiences. These films, made ten years after the British Colonial Film Unit's *Mister British at Home*, showed a few simple facets of life in France (this was the period of the French community). Of these few films made—*Bonjour Paris*, *L'élevage du mouton*, *Un petit port de pêche français*, etc.—only the memory remains today (and only in France, not in Africa), although they did incorporate an interesting experimental commentary in basic French, using a vocabulary of only 1500 carefully chosen words. The few showings that these films had in Africa appear to have yielded encouraging results there, but the experiment, like many others, was never pursued.

It is only since independence that genuinely African educational films have begun to be made on former French Africa. As usual, the initial impetus came partly from the enthusiasm of a few individuals for the cinema, but the main factor was the appreciation that the young African nations had for film's possibility as a medium of communication.

Film centers have sprung up quite rapidly, and although their initial efforts may be modestly limited to a few films on current political events, the centers are at least operating and educational films figure in all of their production programs. I have not been able to collect all of the information hoped for on the organization of these centers; many of them prefer to remain modestly silent about their activities until they have produced some real films. The general pattern though is to use 16mm film for basic production, and for more important films, to call in outside producers who make 35mm films for general distribution. The centers are equipped with projection trucks either converted locally, or received as gifts on the occasion of the country's independence (Togo, for example, received a complete mobile cinema truck as a gift from the United States). Examples of recent productions are the following:

Mauritania: A 35mm film on independence by a good crew from France (unfortunately a high budget film).

Senegal: The Film Section, after likewise having called in foreign producers, (e.g., *Dakar a un siècle* made by Actualités Françaises) has, since 1958 had its own newsreel crew. Since 1959, it has had, thanks to Paulin Soumanou Vieyra, the first African producer to graduate from IDHEC, a center with 16mm and 35mm equipment which makes educational films locally, and is a co-producer (with a Senegalese motion picture company headed by another African filmmaker, Blaise Senghor) of short and feature films.

Mali: Since the breakup of the Mali Federation, a Mali Film Center has been set up at Bamako for "the political education of the individual, the citizen, and the worker." It has already made political events films on the visits of foreign heads of state (shot in 16mm), and has also called in foreign technicians to make purely educational films like Joris Ivens' excellent *Demain à Nanguila*.

Ivory Coast: The Film Center of the Information Service of the Ivory Coast, after making a number of 16mm

information shorts, sometimes with sound, since 1958, called in the French producer, Jean Ravel, to make the first synthetic film about the Ivory Coast, in connection with the opening of the Abidjan Bridge. The Center also cooperated fairly actively in the making of two of my own films, *Moi, Un Noir*, and *La Pyramide Humaine*. For the past year, an Ivory Coast motion picture company (associated with the Société de Dakar) has been expanding its activities and is now competing with a French newsreel company for the production of a newsreel program.

Dahomey: Despite a relatively restricted budget (15 million francs CFA for the whole Information Service, as compared with 40 million in Upper Volta and 71 million in the Ivory Coast), the film section, spurred on by the energetic Minister of Information, has since 1959 been producing a *Revue Dahoméenne Trimestrielle* in 16mm color, which runs for about half an hour. Sixteen millimeter color film has also been used for some ten educational films since 1960, including *J'étais un Tilapia* which recently won first prize at the 16mm Film Festival at St.-Cast, France in 1961. Dahomey has only one mobile cinema truck, but it does remarkable work; 132 shows have been screened in six months to a total of 300 thousand spectators.

Cameroun: The Cameroun Film Service, run by an enthusiastic group, has installed its own developing and printing laboratories, cutting rooms, and sound synchronization rooms and thus can meet the optimum newsreel criterion of screening topical events within twenty-four hours of their occurrence. It may be expected, with Alain Gheerbrandt's team in charge, to expand its activities still more in the coming months.⁵

Chad: In 1959, to mark the Republic's independence, the Ministry of Information asked Serge Ricci to make a 16mm color film with the title *Le Tchad a un an*, and in 1960, Suzanne Baron, a French producer, and formerly chief editor of many African films, made a 35mm color film for the Independence Day celebrations.

Upper Volta: At the present time, the Republic of Upper Volta is undoubtedly a model in the field of African educational film production. Under Serge Ricci's leadership, a complete 16mm production and distribution center (without laboratory) has been established at Ouagadougou. Although the first films made were mainly political in character (*A minuit, l'Indépendance*, a 16mm color film on the independence of the four alliance states of Niger, Dahomey, Ivory Coast, and Upper Volta) since 1961 the center has been producing true educational films with an African technical staff trained on the spot.

Niger: The Mass Communications Service of Niger so far has no more than an embryonic film center (specializing in political newsreels), but the Republic has done a good deal in the area of mass education through films in cooperation with the Niger Museum and the Research Institute (IFAN). On the production end, recourse has been taken to European directors (I have made seven films in Niger, Henri Brandt has made one, etc.). An interesting experiment in production was a Niger-Canadian effort made in 1959-60 to mark the Republic's first birthday and Independence Day. This film, *Le Niger, jeune république*, was directed by Claude Jutra and produced by

the National Film Board of Canada. At this time, an initial version has been broadcast over Canadian television, and the National Film Board of Canada is preparing a Djerma and a Hausa language version for distribution within the Republic of Niger. With UNESCO's help, an audiovisual center attached to the Research Institute is now being organized; it plans to build, in 1962, a 4000-seat open air theater where plays can be performed and films shown.⁶

To conclude this bird's eye view of educational films in former French Africa, it may be noted that many avenues toward the cooperation of all of these efforts is now being explored, either at the government level (the African Mass Communications Services, in France the Ministry of Aid and Cooperation, the Comité du Film Ethnographique of the Musée de l'Homme, and the National Film Center) or on the commercial plane (Actualités Françaises, Pathé, Gaumont, the television branch of SORAFOM). So far, no solution has been agreed upon, but opinion seems to be leaning toward a center in Paris (like the Overseas Film and Television Center in London) which I myself suggested following a meeting on African cinema in Niamey in June of 1960. Such a center would provide a permanent liaison at the technical, artistic, and professional levels between Africa and the only readily accessible laboratories, in Paris.⁷

IMPORTANCE OF THESE DIFFERENT TYPES OF FILM FROM CINEMATOGRAPHIC, CULTURAL, AND SOCIOLOGICAL POINTS OF VIEW

In analyzing the cinematographic, cultural, and sociological value of African films, they will again be divided into the two categories briefly surveyed above: (1) Commercial and documentary films, (2) Education films. The reason again is the impossibility of making a combined study of films so different in object and having developed on such different lines.

Commercial and Documentary Films

Cinematographic value. While the growth of commercial and documentary filmmaking has obviously been accompanied by an improvement in quality, it must be emphasized from the beginning that the relative worth of the results, cinematographically and socially, remains lower than that of corresponding films from other areas of production. This phenomenon should not be considered an isolate but rather should be viewed in the context of the overall policy of mediocrity, whose effects are still making Africans suffer.

In English-speaking Africa, motion pictures achieved far less healthy growth than trade or education: the British were not interested in African cinema except for use in educational areas (which will be discussed later), and left the field in their African territories to American filmmakers more concerned with exoticism and the box-office than with African culture or motion picture art.

In French-speaking Africa, the evolution of quality followed a more complex pattern. Although Léon Poirier and the crew that made *La Croisière Noire*, Marc Allégret, Marcel Griaule, and more recently the Ogooué-Congo and ethnographic film crews undoubtedly outclassed the Colonial

Civil Service filmmakers, all too frequently genteelness or contamination by the surrounding mediocrity made them incapable of aiming at a job that was totally creative. Today it is a peculiar experience to re-watch a film like *Sous les masques noirs* made in 1938 by Marcel Griaule, a film set in a "Colonial Exposition" context with a commentary and incidental music which seem entirely old fashioned. Why has a very comparable film like *Los Hurdes* made at the same period by Bunuel, not aged similarly? Is it because of Africa's very considerable progress, as compared with Spain's post-Civil War stagnation? It is impossible to say, but all old films on Africa are terribly dated, and those who love both the cinema and Africa who are able to catch from the still splendid images the message now stifled, feel the urge to re-edit the films and add authentic sound effects and a scientific commentary.

The same applied to more recent films. *Au Pays des Pygmées*, made in 1948 with terrific precautions, was Africa's first ethnographic film. Yet today, it has lost the power it had ten years ago to stir artistic emotions or the feeling of scientific discovery. Here again, one wants to remake the commentary, re-edit the film, or even take the more serious step of starting again from the beginning.⁸

How is it then that African films have aged so quickly? I am afraid that the reason is their lack of quality. It is the masterpieces among European and American films which are perennial, but the bulk of their output of ten years back is now just as impossible to sit through as the African films of the same period.

A point that we must grasp is that, in fact, African masterpieces are extremely rare. Admittedly, I have often drawn attention to good qualities in these films in my current report, but even so, the level is pretty low by world standards. We know that after *Louisiana Story* (which has not aged in the slightest), Robert Flaherty intended to go to Africa to make a fifth film and fifth masterpiece. Unfortunately, death was to prevent African film production from achieving a place of honor in the history of cinema through a film by Flaherty.

Should this be taken to mean that in the cinema art Africa's score is nil? I don't think so: all of the films mentioned had some merit to them, and still do, yet not one of them will really find a place in the history of the cinema.⁹

Cultural and sociological value. Is the same to be said for these films on the cultural and sociological level? Sociologically, these films retain their value; even though films grow scientifically sound as ethnographic techniques improve, the fact remains that the intervening stages are of great interest. Films now out of date like *Voyage au Congo* or *La Croisière Noire*, or aging films like *Au Pays des Pygmées* or *Masques Dogon*, are of considerable historical value, not only as milestones in the history of African films but also as unique evidence of the outlook and behavior of an epoch, its culture in the scientific sense.

Keeping to the classification in the previous chapter of more recent films made since 1950, we find in each class of film a sociological content area of great importance.

The "exotic Africa" films, like *King Solomon's Mines*, *Nagana*, or the *Tarzan* films, exhibit screen stereotypes of the continent as seen by outside observers and, however

distorted the latter's vision may be, the errors are of absorbing interest in themselves. It is due to this genre of film and above all because it has a public that it becomes easier to explain some manifestations of racism which today seem incongruous. Even when Africa has become just another continent and when men have stopped basing their judgments on the color of their neighbors' skin, the exotic style will survive, just as Westerns survive long after the end of the adventure period on the western prairies of America.

The "ethnographic Africa" films, evolving from superficiality to a steadily increasing degree of penetration provide world culture with visual and sound records of civilizations either vanishing or becoming completely transformed. For instance, when I was beginning to shoot *Moro-Naba* in Upper Volta in 1957, a film of the Mossi chieftain's funeral in the old tradition, I was fully aware that my ramshackle camera and poor tape recorder were capturing data of essential importance, not merely to Upper Volta but to world culture, since this was almost certainly the last observance of a dying custom. The next *Moro-Naba* was definitely going to be Catholic, and, without my film, the great traditional funeral rites would have faded away into oral tradition or a few incomplete reports by ethnographers.

The films of "emergent Africa," told in the pictures already discussed, are just as irreplaceable, and even though the technique is often poor and the narrations outdated even before the film is printed, documents such as *Afrique 50*, *Les Statues meurent aussi*, or *Le Carnaval des Dieux*, remain, despite the irritation they may arouse, unique testimonies of a history which is a perpetual source of wonder. Indeed, one would be almost tempted to welcome their premature aging as a proof of the vitality of African evolution.

Lastly, films of Africa by Africans, or films of Africa with Europeans providing technical knowhow only and leaving action and words as much as possible to Africans, will probably always retain the quality of bold experimentation. It has already been emphasized that European filmmakers, however sympathetic, cannot get inside the skins of Africans, and that overindulgence toward the first purely African films was a form of racism as sterile as any other. While these films were suspect to begin with, these suspicions have gradually been allayed, projecting an image of Africa that could be related to by people who hitherto had completely ignored the continent. For example, thanks to a film like *Come Back Africa*, the problem of racial segregation in South Africa has been brought home to many Europeans who before had never known or cared to know anything about it. Another more personal example is found in the unexpected results of the showing of my *Moi, un Noir*. From the African point of view, this film has been repeatedly criticized for presenting a portrayal of a "low life" African milieu. Yet it also awoke the spontaneous sympathy of the humblest audiences, who discovered a man who looked different, spoke a different language, behaved differently, but after all was quite close to themselves.

It is on this level that some of us impatiently and eagerly await the coming of genuinely African films. They will not, of course, be a series of masterpieces from the start, but they will be a thousand times more moving than any of the films we have been discussing, since, for the first time, Africans will be speaking directly with other people. Cinemato-

graphically, African films may well be of indeterminable length, in a language which makes subtitles necessary, and using music in ways that would be unthinkable to us. But once the first shock is over, I know that such documents will have an unequalable value. Sociologically, film, a medium whose full scope is still unexplored, will enable men to tell and show the world directly what they are, what they do, and what they think. Culturally, the impact of these films will be still greater, since they will be made for people of a common culture, people to whom the idiom will be understandable from the start, without their being able to read or write.

Educational Films

The recent date at which educational films started in Africa, as well as their moderate quality, prohibit my dwelling on their cinematographic, sociological, or cultural value.

From the cinematographic point of view, it must be admitted that with very few exceptions (in particular the Ghana Film Unit) the films are frankly of quite limited artistic value. They are of course a particularly difficult type of film to make, and for that very reason require absolutely first rate directors. Unfortunately alike in former French, British, or Belgian Africa, most of the directors (leaving aside exceptions like Sean Graham) were (and are) amateurs, administrators, or missionaries.

Sociologically, more value can be derived from these films by studying where they failed rather than by seeing where they succeeded. In particular, it would be interesting to make a methodical study of the means employed and actual results obtained in a specific field such as health, or housing. If one took films of quality such as *The Boy Kumasenu*, *Demain à Nanguila*, or *A minuit l'Indépendance*, I think that it would become apparent that they did not have, and will not have, the slightest influence at all on juvenile delinquency, the role of agricultural cooperatives, or the building of a national spirit.

Should one then condemn these films? I think not, since the role they do and should fulfill culturally remains essential in spite of everything. Actually, they are irreplaceable (if awkward) means of communication about a continent where information is precisely what is lacking. (In the capital of an African state more is known about what is going on everywhere else in the world than about the surrounding community.) Secondly, these education films remain a training school for the African film industry of tomorrow. I have already said that whatever we may think of the films produced by the Colonial Film Unit and by William Sellers and his group, it is through these films that the cinema has reached the smallest villages in Africa and has become a familiar means of education. And it is in making them that the technicians of the African cinema of tomorrow are learning their craft.

ANALYSIS OF NEW TRENDS AND THE CONDITIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICAN CINEMA

In this last section I shall not separately discuss education, commercial, and documentary films, since all of them, in my

view, are equally involved in the future of the new African cinema. The only type of film requiring separate consideration is the newsreel. So far, it has hardly been mentioned for two reasons. First, apart from a few more or less periodical "screen magazines" which really cannot be thought of as newsreels, the latter is a very recent development in response to the demands of the newly independent African republics. Second, newsreels are mainly irrelevant to our present subject, since despite the fact that they provide excellent training for film technicians, time factor requirements in shooting, editing, adding sound, and distributing are such to make it a highly specialized area of cinematography.

It is the failure to understand this difference which has led some African nations to harness their promising young filmmakers to the production of this kind of film, condemning them thereby to total frustration in the area of motion picture art itself. Undoubtedly the young African Republics urgently need newsreel services, but, in fact, the only way of meeting this need is to attend to it independently of all other film activities. Each state should have a team specializing exclusively in this type of filmmaking, and should have an arsenal of equipment reserved for this type of work. Even so, there are from the start two conflicting choices: between news films shot and processed entirely in the country and those processed abroad.

Using the methods recommended by UNESCO, it is possible, in 16mm black and white, to create a complete newsreel system at low cost, including cameras, sound recording equipment, development and printing labs, and projection rooms. A disadvantage of this is the visual mediocrity of the films thus far made; but an important advantage is the ability to show the films (as elsewhere in the world) a few days if not a few hours after being shot—the essential quality of newsreels.

However, the example of newsreels made in the developed countries in 35mm (and then in color) has tempted the young republics to try to make films of the same quality, although they do not have the means to do so locally. Results of this to do are as follows: either, as in Senegal or the Ivory Coast, monthly or bi-monthly news digests, shot in 35mm, are processed in Paris by a specialist firm, or, as in Mali, newsreels are shot in color and then have a narration or background music added. In both cases, the result is more like a magazine than a true cinematographic journal; the delays in shipping and other adjustments prohibit the films from being projected immediately after being shot.

The problem arises in the same terms for commercial or educational films: in my view, it is the choice of technical method which will set the course of African filmmaking. Financially speaking, African film production is stuck with following the low-budget route, first because of the scarcity of cinemas and second because of the extremely meager budgets of the African republics. These countries therefore need to be able to resort to money saving methods. We will consider these possibilities as concern shooting, sound recording, editing and sound synchronization, distribution via both commercial cinemas and mobile truck units, and finally, in terms of television possibilities. It must be emphasized here that a low budget film need not be a low-grade film. For the reduction need not be made at the expense of the story, but simply by changing the operation's

financial terms along lines that may need refinement in detail but have already been followed successfully (the so-called "nouvelle vague" school in France is in fact an attempt to liberate cinematographic art from economic constraints).

Shooting

The choice to be made is between 16mm and 35mm. I have already drawn attention, in the first part of this report, to the important influence of the 16mm camera's appearance in the post-war African film scene. The 16mm camera was originally only for amateurs. The enormous extension of its use was due to the war, when it became the tool of the combat cameramen. In the United States in particular, the 16mm format has made considerable progress, and as early as 1945, successful blowups were made from 16mm to 35mm. These attempts were so conclusive that Walt Disney, a filmmaker so exacting in his concern with image quality, used blown-up 16mm for his great "Wonders of Nature" series.

In Europe, 16mm only came into professional use with the appearance of television, but already, pictorial quality is practically unaffected by the film format.¹⁰ The only outstanding problem until recently was color enlargement (the size of grain made it impossible to use the 16mm color negative direct and copies had to be made from dupe negatives with a displeasing increase in contrast). The appearance of soft color original film of the Ektachrome type has solved the problem.

The advantages of shooting in 16mm are considerable: the cameras are lighter and thus easier to handle. Film costs are a quarter of the costs of 35mm. Finally, successful tests of a series of prototypes suggest that in the very near future, noiseless portable cameras will be available, permitting synchronous sound shooting under all conditions with both minimum equipment and crew.

Of course great progress has also been made in reducing the weight and increasing the flexibility of 35mm cameras. But why use a technique that may be equalled or surpassed in a few years time and which costs four times as much for results of hardly perceptible technical superiority?

Sound Recording

Sound recording techniques have also made progress toward greater simplification. When the crew of the Ogooué-Congo films was shooting *Au Pays des Pygmées*, in 1946, its sound recording equipment (a disc recorder) weighed nearly a ton and required a crew of three or four for operation. I have already mentioned that I was among the first to use a battery-powered tape recorder in Tropical Africa. While the original models weighed nearly 50 pounds and yielded rather indifferent results, improvement was fairly rapid. Today these tape recorders are standard motion picture equipment, both on location and in the studio.

Three years ago a number of manufacturers solved the problem of synchronizing unperforated sound tape (which slips, whereas perforated film does not) by recording on the tape a separate signal emitted by the camera motor. This technique is also progressing quickly, and today, perfect synchronization is obtainable by using two frequency generators, one regulating the camera speed and the other

printing a signal on the unperforated quarter inch sound tape.

Thus, today, the noiseless camera and battery powered tape recorder combination weighs about 25 pounds and can be handled by two people, or even one. This technique, which is already revolutionizing a part of cinematographic art, is progressing appreciably each month: miniature microphones eliminate all wires and boom poles, inter-operator signals between cameramen allow for the simultaneous use of more than one synchronous camera, and the next step will undoubtedly be to start and stop the camera function by remote control. And we can expect more progress as a result of television.¹¹

Once again, at the very moment when these developments are taking place in motion picture technique, it would be a great pity for the emergent African cinema to opt for the conventional methods and thereby be obliged to replace all of its capital equipment within a few years, in order to regain ground which should never have been lost.

Editing and Sound Tracks

In this area there is less to choose between 16mm and 35mm on financial grounds, since the editing equipment for picture and sound is much the same in cost regardless of the film format. Quality is the same in either case, but once again the cost of 16mm is lower, owing to the saving of tape which is a quarter the price of 35mm.

The materials for a cutting room are extremely simple and basically require comparatively inexpensive equipment (viewer with synchronizer and magnetic head sound reader and amplifier). It is essential that the filmmaking centers in the African republics each have at least one editing table setup; it must not be forgotten that cutting a film remains the best way for the filmmaker to learn his craft, and it would be a pity not to see this exploited by the African film centers.

A sound recording studio is a bit more complex, but in any case, infinitely less so than the broadcasting studio variety. In practice, a small studio with facilities for mixing four sound tracks appears to be essential. With this, all recording can be done locally and, more particularly the dubbing of dialogue or narration in the vernacular languages, which is most important for African filmmaking. (I shall later return to this question, which is essential to the showing of films in rural areas.)

The most serious difficulty is not building and equipping editing rooms or sound studios, but maintaining them: good electronic engineers are rare and it will be necessary to make a special effort to train some to meet this situation.

Distribution

The question of distribution in 16mm versus 35mm is not a problem in Africa since most existing commercial cinemas have both types of projector. In projection, too, 16mm has recently made enormous progress, and with arc projectors the images are fully up to 35mm standards. Rural (or "bush") cinema is already exclusively equipped with 16mm projectors and cannot be supplied with another size. This, then, is not the question; the two important problems seem to me to be the following:

Projection Technique. Although in Europe the travelling cinemas can make do with small screen projectors, owing to their limited audiences, the same is not true in Africa, where full-scale commercial cinemas are comparatively rare. In Africa, an open-air film show in a village is attended by the whole population of the village, i.e., an audience as large if not larger than that in a normal European commercial theater. Part of this audience consists of young people who have travelled extensively and know the experience of urban film showings, and thus cannot be satisfied by a tiny screen with an image that is of inferior luminosity, or by feeble loudspeakers that are easily drowned out by the noise of the audience.

It is therefore necessary to devise projectors adapted to this kind of problem, namely, relatively portable and easily handled units, giving results up to the standards of town cinemas. It seems that the manufacturers are already on the verge of a solution to this problem, using Xenon light sources which give comparable luminosity to that of arc sources, without the inconveniences or dangers. Similarly, these manufacturers have almost solved the problem of designing sound amplifiers which are both powerful enough and portable enough to reach the whole of an audience of several thousand people.

This technical aspect of the distribution problem is extremely important: if we want Africans to go to films, it is essential for projection to be up to normal standards. This was the point that was overlooked until recently by most equipment manufacturers, who were under the impression that educational films could be screened cheaply and draw audiences because admission was usually free.

Language question. The question of the language used is also very different in Africa as compared with other places. In European countries, a foreign film is dubbed or subtitled. But as Africa is still largely illiterate, subtitling is out of the question, since it would be a help to only a very small proportion of the audience. Dubbing is therefore one solution, but once again the proposition is not the same as in other countries and the multilingualism of African republics calls for a fresh approach to the problem. While the official languages of the modern African nations are French or English, this by no means signifies that they are either understood or spoken by the majority of the population, and it is precisely the uneducated and uninstructed sectors of the African public who should be reached with films. It is thus essential to be able to dub films in the languages spoken in all the different regions of a country.

As we have already seen, the Belgians studied and dealt with the problem by having local people deliver a spoken commentary on the film as it was screened. The French, on the other hand, favored the use of a narration in simplified "basic" French, using an abbreviated vocabulary.

Both of these solutions strike me as being outdated, and here again a technological solution appears to be found in the use of double-system projection, with 16mm projectors of this type having in fact been developed by some manufacturers, though for quite other purposes (better sound quality for preparation of sound effects and music tracks). These projectors have an ordinary picture reel, plus a 16mm perforated sound magnetic tape reel. The result is the

flexibility of being able to play a composite optical sound film print, or a double-strand sound and picture copy. What could be done might be to use the optical reel for screening the film with the sound and voice track in the official language (English or French) while the magnetic tape would be recorded in the local sound studio, in one or more vernacular translations. In areas where there is a need for dubbing in several languages, a corresponding number of magnetic sound reels could be recorded, and the correct version selected for a particular performance, according to the language spoken by the majority of viewers.

This solution, or something along similar lines, seems to me to be the only one which will make Africa's transition to real films of its own possible, not merely financially, but above all artistically, since it is well known that an art can only grow in contact with the people among whom it is born: there will not really be an African cinema until it is made for and by the peoples of Africa themselves.

Incidentally, these remarks apply equally to all of the film genres we have discussed—education, documentary, or feature commercial films. African audiences have learned the language of the cinema at a school which was not always perhaps a good one; now they need to build upon that knowledge, to read in "books" appropriate to their own cultures.¹²

The Future of Television

Although television did not originally enter into the purview of this report, it seems to me necessary to say just a few words about it, as it has already appeared in Nigeria. Initially, the government of Nigeria went no further than experiments in television rebroadcasts, and broadcast only programs on film. However local traders have put television receivers on sale, and their success was so immediate and so huge that in Southern Nigeria live television has come to stay.

Of course, for the present, the shows are restricted to political news and to original film programs and advertisements of questionable quality, but I feel that it is necessary to go through this stage in order to settle a number of technical problems, and that the quality of Nigerian television will improve as time goes on.

Following Nigeria's example, Ghana and Ivory Coast are planning to open television networks quite soon, and even in the least developed countries, the problem is rapidly coming to the fore.

Actually, although African television so far may be thought of as serving somewhat materialistic ends, its development can be viewed in another light. It appears that as techniques improve, the cost price of mounting a television network is likely to be lower than that of establishing a rural film circuit. For example, one film truck per seven villages is required to provide one program per week, and the number of print copies will thus be equal to the number of seven-village circuits in the whole of the particular state. On the other hand, with one television in a village, a program per evening can be shown, perhaps by direct broadcast. But there is also another point: television can be an administrative tool of considerable power, for while improved transportation puts any African capital

within a few hours travel of the other capitals of the world, the difficulties of local travel keep those same capitals several days journey from some of their own villages. The latter are only in touch with the district administrative center once a year and with the capital only one day every ten years, plus occasional official flying visits.

Although the same situation is also found in industrial countries, essential daily contact with the rest of the world is ensured through the press. Thus African television appears a means of settling the difficult problem of ineffectual administration due to difficulties of communication. And one might even go further to say that if television does take root, it will give rise to a communication process of unforeseeable possibilities. I have already said that the masses in Africa have grasped the idiom of the cinema screen. They will understand the television medium in the same way, and thus, at one bound, without literacy, will be in direct daily contact with the outer world and with other cultures hitherto beyond their reach.¹³

CONCLUSION

All of these forecasts may seem a bit like something out of science fiction. But re-reading this paper will show how much ground has really been covered from the time when that bioscope was stolen in 1896 by a vaudeville magician and shown in South Africa. This very report is probably already out of date in all the young African republics. Before it reaches them, the full-fledged African cinema will be born. Things are, of course, still in an apprenticeship stage of newsfilm or educational film, but the new nations' young technicians are avid to learn and to follow in the steps of those who have gone before them in the world's schools of cinema art. They are reaching London, Paris, New York, or Moscow little by little, and if their qualifications are not good enough for entry into advanced schools, they attend more modest technical schools or simply find their way to the studios and get taken onto camera crews. Some of them are almost completely non-literate, but they know their cinema by heart; they have already outgrown the Westerns and the gangster films and are turning their attention to more difficult productions. They have found their way to the film libraries and to the art and experimental cinemas. They are jostling to buy 16mm cameras and whatever film they can scrape up, and they are making their first experiments in cinematography.

Already, contact has been made between them and the veterans from the film institutes, and after being separated for a long time, they can meet again speaking the same tongue. A language not to be learned from grammars or dictionaries, but before the screens of darkened film theaters, through the eyepiece of the camera, the earphones of the tape recorder; a language whose words and phrases are not printed on paper but recorded on film and tape, an audiovisual language which all people in the world find they can understand without even knowing that they learned it, a true international language.

NOTES

¹It is interesting to note that the National Film Board of Canada was established by Grierson for similar propaganda purposes. This, incidentally, is how Norman MacLaren's career began.

²It is interesting to note the annual production and distribution figures for films in English language African territories, reported by Mr. Sellers in 1958: *West Africa* (not including Ghana)—The five Film Units of the Federation of Nigeria plus the Gambia and Sierra Leone units produced about 100 35mm films and 150 16mm films. Sixty-eight mobile cinema trucks served a total audience per year of nearly 15 million. *East Africa*—The six Film Units were producing ten 35mm and 78 16mm films per year, had 30 mobile cinema trucks and reached a million viewers.

³There was a heated discussion on this point in July 1958 during the International Symposium on "The Cinema in Africa South of the Sahara" at the Brussels World Fair. The whole team of the Colonial Film Unit took part, and the present writer, carried away by his feelings, argued that in the long run the effect of this sort of film was even negative.

⁴Once again, I have not cited the educational films made in South Africa as they, too, are mostly Afrikaans in language and outlook. A few English-speaking films that I was able to see were mainly semi-publicity films for the mining industries, and in that way were only of secondary interest from the filmic and educational points of view. Nevertheless, now and then, I believe that it is better to have poor films being produced than no films at all. Moreover, it is quite in the cards that in the cinema we will witness a phenomenon similar to that which has occurred in the sphere of the press, with the rise in South Africa of genuine African journalism (c.f. the magazine *Drum*).

⁵I was unable to obtain specific information about the other republics of Equatorial Africa, except the Congo, which in June 1961 indicated that its Mass Communication Service was trying to start a film section, but that with the meager resources at its disposal, no real filmmaking could be undertaken before 1962 or 1963.

⁶At Claude Jutra's instigation, a young designer at the research center, Moustapha Allasane, has already produced a pilot animation, with the shooting being done in Montreal by Jutra, Michel Brault, and McLaren. Since then, this young artist has prepared a medium-length educational film, also animated, and has applied for a UNESCO fellowship for training in Paris and Montreal.

⁷I cannot discuss Portuguese-speaking Africa as I have no information on the subject. The only films I have been able to see, and which were of quite good quality, were made by Portuguese anthropologists in Angola, about the Bushmen of the Northern Kalahari.

⁸Needless to say, my reaction to the majority of my own earlier films is exactly the same.

⁹Going through the chronology of major films between 1892 and 1951 (see *L'art du cinéma des origines à nos jours*, by Georges Sadoul) the following are the few African films that can be found: 1896 France Pathé, *La Dame Malgache*; 1900 Great Britain, William Paul, *Kruger—A Dream of Empire*, Rosenthal, *Escarmouche avec les Boërs*; USA, James White, *Scènes Reconstituées de la guerre du Transvaal*; France Pathé, *La guerre du Transvaal*; 1930 Germany, Ruttman, *Melodies of the World*; 1951 USA, John Huston, *African Queen*—a total of seven films, only two of which were made later than 1900.

¹⁰A very recent film of my own, *Chronicle of a Summer*, was shot in 16mm and enlarged to 35mm. Many of the professional filmmakers who saw this film did not even notice this.

¹¹These technical advances are mainly in 16mm equipment, which is natural enough, considering that television services, using 16mm exclusively, have to provide shows 24 hours a day, or, with two channels, 48 hours per day.

¹²An experiment along these lines is to be tried shortly at Niamey, where, with UNESCO's help, a community theater-cinema is to be built. The present writer, who is partly responsible, will try out more particularly the double-system projectors discussed earlier,

showing not only films from Niger but also film classics with dialogue and narration where necessary, in various local languages.

¹³The gulf is partially bridged already by sound broadcasts. Experiments made with "radiovision" (direct projection of filmstrip during a broadcast program) had a degree of success which argues well for that of television.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

*English translation of "Situation et tendances du cinéma en Afrique," which appeared as an appendix, pp. 374-408, of the

Premier Catalogue Selectif International de Films Ethnographiques sur l'Afrique Noir, Paris, UNESCO, 1967. Rouch's paper was first written and presented to a UNESCO symposium in 1961. A translation of the 1961 original was prepared by UNESCO for limited distribution. Portions of the first third of the article, slightly edited and modified, formed the basis of a short article, "The Awakening African Cinema" published in the *UNESCO Courier*, March 1962. Otherwise, Rouch's extensive knowledge of African cinema has not previously been accessible to an English-speaking public. Special thanks are again due Ms. Marielle Delorme, of the Comité International des Films de l'Homme in Paris, for review and for locating a copy of the 1961 UNESCO translation. Due to the unusual length of the article, it has appeared in two parts.